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TAGS: [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [MTCRE](#) [MNUC](#) [ETTC](#) [KSCA](#) [TSPA](#) [RS](#) [IT](#)
SUBJECT: GOI SUPPORTS USG POSITION ON RUSSIAN MEMBERSHIP IN
AUSTRALIA GROUP; IN RECEIPT OF MTCR POINTS

REF: A. STATE 54784
[1](#)B. ROME 933
[1](#)C. STATE 43394

Classified By: Acting EcMin Kathleen Reddy for reasons 1.4 C, D, and H

[¶](#)1. (C) Summary. Acting EcMin met April 12 with Carlo Tripepi, Senior Advisor for Non-proliferation and Trade Controls to the MFA's Director General for Economic Affairs, to deliver Refs A and C talking points and non-papers. Tripepi said the GOI position on Russian membership in the Australia Group (AG) is that a Russian application for membership in the group would have to be assessed using standard AG requirements for membership, including compliance with the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions and constructive participation in other non-proliferation regimes. Tripepi said he would pass Ref C non-papers on USG proposals to change Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) controls on hydrazine derivatives and polymeric substances to the relevant GOI working-level experts. End summary.

Russian Push for Australia Group Membership

[¶](#)2. (C) Responding to Ref A talking points, Tripepi noted the GOI has adopted the EU position on Russian membership in the AG. According to Tripepi, the EU informed the GOR that it "welcomes Russian interest" in AG membership and that Russian participation in the AG is a "consistent next step" in Russian engagement on nonproliferation issues. According to Tripepi, the EU believes a Russian application to join the AG would have to be "assessed on substantive, not political, criteria ... following Australia Group procedures without exception or discrimination." Tripepi said he would pass Ref A talking points to Antonio Catalano, who would represent the GOI at the G8 Non-Proliferation Director's Group (NPDG) meeting in Moscow.

[¶](#)3. (C) Tripepi then recalled a February 15 meeting with the Russian Ambassador to Italy, the first foreign government official to raise this issue with Tripepi. Tripepi's response to the Russian Ambassador was that while Russia is welcome to apply for AG membership (which Tripepi noted Russia has not yet formally done), the application must be evaluated using AG standard criteria. Tripepi speculated the GOR push for discussion of Russian AG membership within the G8 may be an effort to have the GOR application be evaluated using political, rather than standard AG, criteria. Tripepi also said he had pointedly advised the envoy that Russia had a long way to go before AG membership. He said Russia had met neither Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) nor Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) obligations, nor did Russia have an effective export control regime. Tripepi also characterized Russian behavior in other nonproliferation groups -- the MTCR, Nuclear Suppliers Group, and Wassenaar Arrangement -- as "not constructive."

¶4. (C) Tripepi underscored again that the EU/GOI position is that Russia must meet all of the standard AG criteria for membership. He noted a G8 discussion would "not be productive," since the G8 is the wrong forum for this issue, and that Russian membership in the AG would eventually have to be discussed at the AG. He concluded by noting, however, that it will be difficult to keep the issue out of the G8, as the G8 has discussed non-proliferation issues in the past. Tripepi made specific mention of G8 non-proliferation discussions on India, Pakistan, and China, but noted the G8 had not specifically discussed AG membership at any previous G8 meeting.

¶5. (C) Comment. In an earlier separate conversation with A/EcMin, Tripepi said he thought the U.S. fear of onward proliferation by Russian entities was well-founded, given the powerful criminal element in Russia and large chemical weapons stockpile there. The stockpile, Tripepi repeated several times, is extremely worrisome. He also said Russian behavior was at its worst in MTCR meetings and that Moscow's abrasive opposition to the proposed membership of the Baltic countries was "almost Soviet."

¶6. (C) Comment continued. We have demarched the GOI on Russian AG membership three times: March 16, March 17 (reported Ref B), and April 12. Throughout this timeframe, the GOI has remained opposed to admitting Russia to the AG before Russia has satisfactorily met standard AG criteria, including improved observance of its Biological Weapons Convention and Chemical Weapons Convention obligations and a tighter export control regime. Should the question of discussing the issue in the G8 arise, we believe Italy would support remanding the issue to the competent authority, the Australia Group. End comment.

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